

A
S E R M O N

Preached

At the Assizes

HELD AT

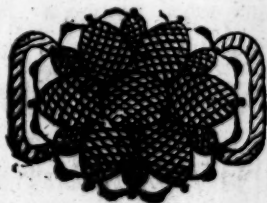
READING,

In the COUNTY of

B E R K S,

July 12th. 1681.

By JOHN OKES M. A. and Vicar of
Shinfield in the County aforesaid.



L O N D O N:

Printed for *Joanna Brome* at the Gun at the West-end of
St. Pauls. 1681.

SERMON

Preached

At the Affizes

HELD AT

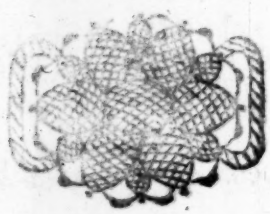
READING

in the COUNTY of

BERKS

July 12th. 1881

By JOHN OKES M. A. and Vicar of
St. Peter's in the County of Berks.



LONDON:

Printed for James Brown at the Queen's the West-end of
St. Paul's. 1881

To the Right Honourable

HENRY

EARL of CLARENDON,

Treasurer to the Queens Majesty,

AND

One of the Lords of his Majesty's most Honourable Privy-Council.

My Lord,

When I preached the ensuing Sermon, I designed nothing less in the world, than the Printing of it; nor am I yet so vain as to think it worthy of the Press. This is a critical and censorious age, wherein none indeed should present their labours to the publick view, but such onely, whose great abilities may prove serviceable to the Common good.

But as for this plain Sermon, it hath nothing at

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The Epistle Dedicatory.

all to recommend it, but your Lordships approbation at the preaching of it, together with those worthy Gentlemen, the High Sheriff and Grand-Jury of the County, who afterwards requested me (as the world may see) to print it: I shall therefore make no other apologie for appearing now in publick, but say, it was their request that caused it. These being all persons of worth, and true Loyalty (which appears by their Address lately made to his Majesty) I could not but bend my inclinations (though with much reluctancy) to satisfy their desires, and chuse rather to expose my self to the Censures of the World, than deny their unanimous and importunate request.

I wish (though I much doubt it) that it may have the same effect, as was by some of them intimated, who used this as an argument to me, That the printing of it may be for the publick good, whereas the preaching could reach onely a few that were then present. I was likewise informed by some others of them, that they heard it reported, this was but the Copy with some little variations of a printed Sermon. But alaa! that did not at all move me, I lookt upon it onely as the impertinence of some peevish Zealots, whose usual method it is to make something to cavil at, rather than want exercise for their reviling faculties.

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The Epistle Dedicatory.

Having thus shewed the World the true and only reason that moved me to print this short discourse; for such indeed it is, and the reason of that was, because I thought brevity most suitable to the occasion for which it was designed. I am now only to beg your Lordships pardon for prefixing so great a Name before a Tract of so little worth; it was only the experience I have had of your Lordships goodness, that emboldened me to do it; and therefore I was no sooner prevailed upon to print this Sermon, but I resolved at the same instant to offer it (how mean soever) to your Lordship's Patronage: and I hope in some sence I may justify the doing of it, because the sole design of this Sermon (how meanly soever performed) is to set forth our duty to God and the King, and therefore most proper to be dedicated to your Lordship, the most exact observer of both. If therefore your Lordship please to accept and favour it, I shall think my self and it secure, notwithstanding all the Censures of the World. I value them not, but shall rest satisfied in this, that I have made some, though but a weak acknowledgement of that duty and service I owe your Lordship, but more especially that your Lordship will vouchsafe to accept such weak performances.

And therefore that Almighty God would bless
your

The Epistle Dedicatory.

your Lordship, and your most excellent good Lady
(from whose joynt benevolence I have received ma-
ny and great favours) with long life, and much pro-
sperity here, and with eternal bliss and happiness
hereafter, is, and ever shall be the Prayer of

My Lord,
Your Lordships most
devoted humble Servant

John Okes.

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And therefore that Almighty God would bless
your

MARK 12. 17.

And Jesus answering, said unto them; Render to Cesar the things that are Cesars, and to God the things that are God's.



These words are our Saviour's answer to a certain Question proposed to him by the Pharisees and Herodians concerning the lawfulness of paying Tribute, as appears by the foregoing Verses: being armed with their Fox-like subtilty, they came unto him, and said, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man; for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Cesar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give? The deceit that lay hid under this Question, may be probably conceived to be thus: (for they came on purpose to try if they could catch him in his words) That if Christ had answered, that it was not lawful to pay it, they would have accused him, and delivered him into the hands of the Roman Governour for a seditious man, according

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to Luke 20. 20. *And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governour.*

And on the other side, if he had said that it was lawful, they would have disgraced him among the people, as one that consented to the Romans Tyranny and Impiety : but he knowing their hypocrisie said unto them, *Why tempt ye me ? bring me a penny that I may see it :* Or, as St. Matthew expresseth it, *Shew me the tribute-mony :* and when they brought it unto him, he saith unto them, *Whose is this image and superscription ? and they said unto him, Cesar's.*

And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Cesar the things that are Cesar's, and to God the things that are God's.

As if he had said, Seeing that God hath subjected you to the Romans, as appears by the Stamp of your currant Coyn, which is a signe of Supream power, bear it patiently, that doth not any way hinder the service you owe to God as you are his people ; and besides it is an easie matter to satisfie both God and Cesar in this payment, which consists but in a little sum of money.

From

From our Saviour's thus stating the Question, we may infer this Proposition: That the duty and service which we ought to perform directly and immediately to Almighty God, doth not acquit or exempt us from paying our due obedience to the civil Magistrate.

For he supposeth something to be necessarily due to both; when he commands us to pay what belongs to each. In the prosecution of this, therefore, I shall insist upon these two things plainly implied in the words of my Text.

1. Our duty as it relates to the Civil Magistrate: *Render to Cesar the things that are Cesar's.*

2. Our duty as it relates to God: *Render to God the things that are Gods.*

1. Of our duty as it relates to the Civil Magistrate: In the handling whereof, I shall endeavour to shew what we are to render as due from us to him. The first thing that I shall mention is Honour; and this must extend it self to our thoughts, words, and actions.

1. First, we must honour him even in our thoughts and intentions; we are not to harbour an ill opinion, nor entertain a prejudicial thought; for though the secrets of the heart

are not accountable to man, because not to be fathom'd by a finite understanding ; yet there is a God that tries the very Heart and Réins: he (to whom the darkness is no darkness, but the night as clear as the Noon-day) can as easily discover the most obscure thoughts as the most apparent actions, and as easily punish them as the most notorious and scandalous crimes.

Curse not therefore the King, no not in thy thought, and curse not the rich in thy bed-chamber : for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter, Eccles. 10. 20.

A contemptuous thought of a King, or lawful Authority, is a sin of an high nature, and therefore not to be indulged by any that think themselves concerned either to be good Subjects or good Christians. We must resist the very first motions , and Check the most secret inclinations to evil ; otherwise it will steal upon us by degrees ; and if once we get a habit of thinking ill, who knows how soon it may break forth into bitter words ? (*for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh ;*) and though our thoughts were our own while confin'd to our breasts, yet being thus vented they cease to be in our power, nor will it be easie to hinder the ill consequence that attends them , or to heal

a Wound made by such sharp Arrows; and therefore first let us restrain our thoughts. And

2. When we speak of Kings and Princes, our words must be reverend and honourable: it is not meet for Christians of any sort to revile and censure one another, much less for Subjects to pretend to judge the actions of their Sovereign. It would be much better certainly, if every one instead of talking of the duty of their Governours, would seriously think on their own.

St. Peter foretelling of a sort of false Teachers, to the end they may be better avoided, describes them by their manners thus, 2 Pet. 2. 10. *viz. Such as walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, self-willed: they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.*

Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusations against them before the Lord, vers. 11.

And St. Jude chargeth them with the same thing, vers. 8. of his Epistle: *Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.*

And it were to be wished, there were none among us, that endeavour by such Stratagems

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as these to amuse the people, and so carry on their own private Plots, and secret designs, by speaking evil of things they understand not.

Reverence to Magistrates is a duty frequently inculcated in Holy Writ : *Thou shalt not revile the Gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people*, Exod. 22. 28. *I counsel thee to keep the King's commandment*, and that in regard of the oath of God, Eccles. 8. 2. *Be not hasty to go out of his sight : stand not in an evil thing ; for he doth whatsoever pleaseth him*, vers. 3.

Where the word of a King is, there is power : and who may say unto him, What doest thou ? v. 4. If he do ought amiss, he must answer it before the King of Kings ; it is the Subjects duty in the mean while to follow the advice of the Apostle, whose words are these, *1 Tim. 2. 1, 2. I exhort therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men :*

For Kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

And this ought to be done for them, though they were Infidels and Enemies to the Gospel ; yea, though they were persecutors of them that make profession of it : How much more then should

should we respect good Kings, when they not onely profess true Religion themselves, but establish, confirm, and settle the same by good and wholesom Laws?

3. As our thoughts and words must be honourable, so in our actions we must shew a reverence, by being humble and submissive in our carriage and behaviour. There is a civil respect due from Inferiours to their Superiours: and though there be a sort of godly men among us (as they call themselves) that refuse this outward civility, and deny that which others more reasonably pay; I shall not now spend time in answering their frivolous pretensions. *St Paul bids us render fear to whom fear, and honour to whom honour is due.*

And *St. Peter*, in the very same verse, bids us *fear God, and honour the King*: And that we ought to shew a reverence by some civil behaviour, or outward submission, is plain from *Levit. 19. 32. Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God.*

And we may add to this the words of the fifth Commandment, *Honour thy Father and thy Mother*; the meaning and scope of which is, That the quality of mens persons and places
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in whatsoever estate, whether Natural, Civil, or Ecclesiastical, and with whatsoever relation to us, ought to be duly acknowledged and respected.

Now such submission and duty cherished in the hearts, and shewn in the words and behaviour of Subjects, would render the difficulties of Government more supportable, and alleviate those cares and troubles which the most lawful Governours need continually undergo.

2. The second thing required as due from us to the civil Magistrate, is Obedience : This is a duty frequently inculcated in holy Scripture, *Tit. 3. 1.* St. Paul directs *Titus* to put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey Magistrates, to be ready to every good work. And *Rom. 13. 5.* the same Apostle saith, *Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for Conscience-sake.* Into what dregs of times then are we fallen ! St. Paul urges obedience to Magistrates for Conscience-sake, and yet in our days that has been made an argument for the contrary ; we have some among us that pretend for Conscience-sake to disobey them.

When Rebellion and Hypocrisie pass for duty a

Duty and Obedience, the best and most sacred things are not secured from being abused: Religion it self is no longer accounted so by some men, than it serves their turns and interests; and therefore that hath been made use of to cloak the most absurd and wicked designs. Devotion hath been, and is still, a Plea for disobedience: and the pretended tenderness, which others may more justly call the niceness of a disaffected Conscience, will not permit men to obey the King, for fear of disobeying God. And yet there is nothing more plain in the whole Scripture than this, that *every soul ought to be subject to the higher powers*, Rom. 13. 1. And that we may not mistake the meaning of those words, St. Peter tells us more distinctly what is meant by higher Powers, 1 Pet. 2. 13, 14. *Submit your selves to every ordinance of man for the Lords sake, whether it be to the King, as supream, or unto governours, as unto them that are sent by him, for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well.*

But alas! Fancy and Opinion sometimes over-rule Reason and Scripture both; or else we should never have known such horrid impieties committed among our selves, as to see a King dethron'd, and murder'd by his own

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Subjects ; and the House of God, which our Saviour denominated a House of Prayer, to become a Den of Thieves ; which was too truly so indeed, when our Churches were profan'd, robbed, and plundred of their decent Ornaments, by wicked and cruel hands ; and pure Religion which is there professed, forced to retire, and hide its head in a corner ; and our Clergie (the lawful Ministers of Christ) sequestred from their Livelihood, and employment too : all which was violently carried on under the specious names of Reformation, and Liberty of Conscience ; and the actors all this while, the greatest pretenders to Religion and Holiness, carrying a fair outside, whatever was within. But even thus did the Pharisees of old, who could devour Widows houses under pretence of their long Prayers.

How far such practices as these are from that duty we stand obliged to by the Laws both of God and man, must needs be plain and clear to every one that is not wilfully blind : They are the greatest reproach to the Protestant Religion, and even a scandal to Christianitie itself ; and therefore to be exploded and for ever abominated by all that put on the name of either.

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The obedience required of us, is a voluntary and hearty doing what our lawful Superior commands, or patient suffering what he inflicts, though it should be either without just cause, or somewhat more excessively than the cause requires: but in all lawful commands, we stand obliged to do what he requires by Law to be done; and a Passive obedience in this case is not a sufficient discharge of our duty, (much less can an active disobedience find any Plea.) For such as refuse to do what the Law commands, though they may seem content to suffer the punishment it inflicts, are no better observers of the Law, than a Thief, who is content to be hanged after he hath robb'd his Neighbours. If either of them suffer the Law, it is for their offence in transgressing it; and what glory is it, if when men be buffeted for their faults they take it patiently?

This makes them neither the better men, nor the better Christians; for besides that it is to be supposed that they would not suffer any penalty if they could find a way to escape it: This doth not answer the end and design of the Law, which requires our obedience in an active performance of the things commanded; and the punishment is onely added in case of

contempt and disobedience. Such therefore a
 refuse to obey the Law, though they suffer
 the penalty it inflicts, cannot reasonably be
 thought good observers thereof, because it is
 not the punishment that the Law-giver intends
 but the doing that which he requires; and such
 as refuse to do this, or act contrary to-it, not
 onely offend the Magistrate under whom they
 live, but even God himself, who commands us
 to reverence and obey him. This therefore can
 be no refuge for those pretending Zealots, who
 endeavour to make the world believe they are
 peaceable, good Subjects, if they quietly suf-
 fer the penalty of the Laws: Alas! this is no
 discharge of their duty; the Magistrate onely
 suppresses their rebellious practices, for which
 they make Religion a Cloak, and punishes their
 disobedience, which they endeavour to palliate
 with Devotion; but the duty required of
 them, remains still unperformed, and sin lies at
 their door; who invert *St. Paul's* rule, and
 think it sufficient to obey merely for wrath,
 and not for Conscience-sake. The Authours
 and Abettors therefore of such absurd Do-
 ctrines, would do well to consider, that when
 they fall under due correction, this doth not
 acquit or free them from their first offence in
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breaking the Law, but is designed onely to keep them in better order, and make them better Subjects for the time to come.

Nor will it at all justifie our disobedience to lawful Authority, what some men urge, *viz.* That the things required are not commanded in the Word of God; it is sufficient if they are not therein forbid, nor contrary to it.

That the powers ordained of God, and by him set over us, have authority to order and determine some things not directly and expressly commanded in the Word of God, is plain and evident even from those many Texts of holy Scripture which require and enjoyn obedience to the Magistrate. As for those things positively set down in the Word of God, there we have directions for the performance of them: but then, when we are commanded moreover, even by the same Word of God, to obey the Magistrate, this must necessarily suppose him invested with a power to command us some things not before specified, but left to his determination; and so far as his commands are agreeable to the Word of God, we are bound to obey them.

If the Magistrate command us any thing
that

that is manifestly impious, and contrary to the known will of God, we are then with reverence to refuse, and alledge our duty to God for our Warrant; but this refusal must be with submission and reverence, still reserving our lawful subjection and Loyalty; this must be with a passive obedience, not resisting, but submitting to the penalties of the Law: and in this case we must betake our selves to the weapons of the Primitive Christians, *viz.* Prayers and Tears. But thanks be to God, we have no ground for any such complaints; we have no Commands imposed upon us, but such as are easie to be born, and very agreeable to a good Christian temper.

May it therefore please Almighty God long to continue such a Prince among us, whose endeavours may always be to protect and support such as are committed to him, and to govern them prudently, and after a holy manner!

And may it enter into every Subjects heart to be faithful, submissive, and obedient to his Sovereign; not in outward appearance onely, but in truth and sincerity. It is not enough for us to own his Supream power and authority, unless we assert them in our actions, and

demonstrate the reality of our intentions by all the outward acts of fidelity and love. Nor must we be wanting, if need so require, to assist him with our Estates: We are bid by St. Paul to *render Tribute to whom Tribute*, as well as *Honour to whom Honour is due*. And that Tribute was anciently paid, is evident by our Saviour's determination in my Text of the Question proposed to him; and elsewhere he confirmed the same (though at the expence of a Miracle) even by his own practice, *Matth. 17. 27. Go thou to the Sea, speaking to St. Peter, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up: and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money, that take, and give unto them, i. e. the receivers of the Tribute-money, for me and thee.*

Would every one in their proper places thus perform their respective duties, we may by the blessing of God continue long to be a happy people.

There would be no need of affixing penalties to the Laws, if men would be perswaded to do their duties; till then (which is daily to be wished) there is need of a Sword of Justice to restrain the extravagant errors of froward men, at least to correct their folly and

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and obstinacy, if they still persist in them; for the Magistrate beareth not the Sword in vain; he is the Minister of God to execute wrath upon him that doth evil; and to him in a great measure we owe the security of our Lives and Estates: for though the Law of God forbids the commission of murder, robbery, and such-like crimes, yet it is to be feared, through Atheism and Irreligion, which too much abound in these our days, those Laws would soon be forgotten, if the Law of the Land did not provide a punishment answerable to those and such-like crimes; it were well if one or the other, or both, would keep men in awe, and bring us to a sense of our duty, so as to make us voluntarily and freely *Render to Cesar the things that are Cesar's, and unto God the things that are God's*; which brings me to speak of the second thing I mentioned contained in the words of my Text, *Viz.*

2. Our Duty as it relates to God.

Him we must serve with reverence and a holy fear, and frame the whole of our lives and actions according to the rules prescribed in his Word; there we may be directed how to walk, and there we have the general rules whereby things

things are to be ordered in the Church, according to which our Governours are to make particular Laws, and we to obey them; to prevent that disorder and confusion, which would otherwise unavoidably happen, if every one was left to his own liberty of prescribing his own way of Worship (I mean in publick) according as his fancy or humour leads him.

Since God hath not appointed any certain Model of Worship whereby he will be served, and no otherwise, it is very rationally to be supposed that he hath left it to the prudence of our Governours to consider and determine how Christian Societies, when they meet together, may most solemnly and decently perform that duty which God requires of them.

And where is or can this be better practised, than it is now in the Church of *England*? the best model'd Church this day in the Christian World. Her Doctrines are all heavenly and divine; and that Worship which she prescribes is pure and undefiled, attended only with some innocent, harmless, Ceremonies,

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in themselves indifferent, but appointed to be used for Decency, Order, and Edification. I shall not now spend time to prove the lawfulness, or urge the usefulness of a set Form of Prayer to be used in the publick Assembly: that hath been sufficiently cleared by the Pens of our learned Writers.

Now it hath pleased God to make the Magistrate his Vicegerent on Earth, to take care of, and defend his Church: (and then indeed may Kings and Queens be fitly stiled nursing Fathers, and nursing Mothers, when they cherish and propagate that Faith which was once delivered to the Saints.)

And because we are beset with many both publick and private Enemies, who would gladly destroy our Church, and lay her Name and Honour in the dust; she is therefore fenced about with good and wholesome Laws, such as provide a punishment for her disobedient Children, and a scourge for such as will not be reclaimed: these (if they were duely executed) would preserve that reverence and esteem that is due to her; these would reduce many of those already departed from her, and pre-

preserve those that are yet in her Communion from being infected with the poison of Schism and Sedition, as too too many have been already.

But I could wish rather that every one would be perswaded to reform his own errors, and endeavour, as much as in him lies, to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Would men lay aside their prejudice, and embrace truth for the truth's sake, there would be then some hopes of a general reconciliation. But when they divide themselves into Schisms and Factions, there is no hopes of effecting that which is of all good men to be wished, namely, that we might be all of one minde, as there is one Lord, one Faith, and one Baptism.

If we could, or rather indeed if we would walk together to the house of God as friends, this would conduce much to the honour of God, the credit and advantage of our Religion, and the settling of a lasting Peace in this our troubled Nation; this would be the way to discourage all the Plots and Conspiracies of the *Romish* Party, and would be

the best Bulwark against Popery it self, so much dreaded among us: it is their business and endeavour to keep us at odds, the better to carry on their own designs; and therefore they have their Emissaries up and down to preach Schism and Sedition into peoples ears.

By such arts as these, they insinuate themselves among the poor deluded people of our separate Congregations; and joyning with them in their clamours against the Church of *England*, crying it down for superstitious, and Popishly affected, they pass there for gifted Brethren; and real Popery is carried on by such disguises: Whereas, were we united among our selves, they would soon find it in vain to make any such attempts upon us.

But alas! while the breach is kept open by those sad Distractions and Divisions that are among our selves, how easily may the Pope enter in? Schismatics, whatever they pretend, do but carry on the Pope's Cause for the more strength and number any Faction draws from the Church, so much is added

added to her Enemy, who hath, perhaps, no other hopes of destroying, but by dividing us.

If therefore those (good) men that cause such Schisms and Divisions among us, had that love for the Protestant Interest as they have for the bare Name, they would be more zealous for the preservation of it; and think it their duty, at least in this juncture of affairs, to comply with the Church, and joyn in her Communion for securing our Religion, rather than by perverseness and obstinacy endanger its total ruine. If they had that love for Peace which they pretend, they would seek more after it, and prise it at a higher rate, than to break the unity of the Church upon such slender accounts as now they do.

Oh that they would yet in time bethink themselves! that we may at last with one minde and one accord praise and glorifie that God who is the God of Peace and Order. This if we would do heartily and sincerely, he would certainly reward us for it: for they that love and seek peace, shall enjoy everlasting peace hereafter. Now

Now to our God, who is the God of Peace; to his onely Son, who is the Prince of Peace; and to the Holy Ghost, who is the Spirit of Peace, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, glory, praise, power, and dominion, henceforth and for evermore, *Amen.*

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